Attachment

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/40637793.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Soulmates, With A Twist, Canon Related, POV Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal (TV) Season/Series 01, Angst, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Sex, top/bottom not applicable, Possessive Hannibal Lecter
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Soulmate Disorders / Your Forever Is All That I Need
Stats:	Published: 2022-07-29 Completed: 2022-08-20 Words: 6,147 Chapters: 2/2

Attachment

by wormsin

Summary

"The chemical reaction in his body is swift and foreign. It's fascinating. Like a first kill. He did not know he could feel this way again."

Soulmate AU where the average person has several, deep bonds with people over the course of their life. Will has an attachment disorder. So does Hannibal.

Follows the episodes of S1.

Notes

I'm not into typical Soulmate AUs. There's not a monogamous bone in my body, and the idea of "one true love" has always disturbed me. So, like all ff tropes that aren't my thing, I have to do my own version of it.

In this universe, the average person has multiple soulmates or "bonds" over the course of their life. Bonds can be romantic, platonic, or familial, or even be between people who work closely together. Bonds can be reciprocated or not, can fade, can be broken. Spending time away from your bond-pair can be physically painful and emotionally deregulating. Some people have disorders where they fail to bond in a healthy manner. It's not very different than how we chemically and socially bond with each other in real life, just with the dial turned up. And if there are old stories and myths about mind melding with your bond-partner, well, no one gives much credence to that in modern society.

Numbers indicate the corresponding episode. I'll be earning the rating next chapter.

Episodes 1-8

1.

He does not make a good first impression on Will Graham, but he has made an impression. The sliver of the man's face, sneering with muffled rage, stays with him. Incandescent. Surely something that cuts so deep goes both ways.

The chemical reaction in his body is swift and foreign. It's fascinating. Like a first kill. He did not know he could feel this way again.

It is with a flair for the dramatic, and no small effort, that he arranges Cassie's body in the field. But it takes merely a sleight of hand to warn Mr. Jacob Hobbs and paint the kitchen in blood. Shots fire, and Hannibal is struck by Will's trembling madness. They bathe in blood together, and Hannibal thinks, *now you are mine.*

2.

Now, the man paces the upper balcony to put distance between them, and Hannibal suspects he knows why. It's not surreptitious. Will takes the opportunity to stare at his books and patient notebook system. "Therapy doesn't work on me," he says.

"Then perhaps we should dispense with it," Hannibal replies. From where he leans on the desk, he taps the letter printed on his embossed stationery. "You are approved for field work, more or less sane."

That gets Will's attention. "You rubber stamped me." He sounds doubtful.

"I thought it would impede our conversations. Now we can talk without the specter of Jack Crawford darkening our doorstep."

Will sighs and turns his back, leaning on the balcony rail in much the same way Hannibal leans on the desk. "And if I don't want to talk?"

"You're free to leave." Of course, he would need to come down the ladder first, and he seems reluctant to do so. "I've had many treatment resistant clients over the years. Why doesn't therapy work on you?"

Will leans towards the bookcase, and back. His hands are tight on the railing. "I know all the tricks. Plus, boundaries are… flimsy for me."

He doesn't come right out and say it. The way his body bends, it's like if he lets go of the railing he might fly off to somewhere he doesn't intend. "So you build forts," Hannibal ventures.

Will turns around and looks in Hannibal's direction. "I have to."

"You have an attachment disorder," Hannibal says, and sees Will's cheeks flush, his jaw clench, but before he can retort, Hannibal adds, "So do I."

That takes some of the tension out of Will. He looks at Hannibal, appraising, perhaps comforted to regain some power in this situation beyond his height. "I see. Bond apathy?"

"Yes," Hannibal answers without shame, hands folded over his lap. "I had one bond when I was a child. But besides that…"

Will sighs, shoulders relaxing. There's still color high in his face. "I have too many. I have to keep my distance. So I don't think… conversations… are going to be appropriate."

Carefully, now. Hannibal casts his eyes down.

"Yeah." Will scoffs. "I'm bonding with you."

The rush of pleasure he feels at that is difficult to temper. Will looks embarrassed . His eyes are going everywhere but Hannibal. "What do you want to do?" Hannibal asks.

"Well, I certainly can't be in therapy with you." Will wanders to the ladder. "I don't expect anything from you. It's better that I don't indulge in it." He makes his way down, moving and talking like a man determined to leave. "Luckily you're immune," he adds at the bottom, almost cruelly. "This doesn't need to get messy."

"I'm not immune, Will." The way Hannibal says his name is overly familiar. Will slows. Awareness dawns—Hannibal can sense it on him, as sure as the warmth from a starting fire. Nothing can get past Will, it seems. His eyes are blue and wide and beautiful. "It's been many years, but the feeling is unmistakable," Hannibal continues.

"What? When?"

"When we first met." Hannibal sees the pulse jump in Will's neck, and how the point of his adam's apple moves when he swallows.

Will sinks into the black leather chair, and Hannibal sits opposite him. He leans forward, elbows on knees, and Will starts to do the same—then leans back, intentionally going against his instincts to mimic.

"Ok," Will says uneasily.

"I agree that a therapeutic relationship would be counterproductive," Hannibal says. "But I cannot accept complete lack of contact."

"I might be the last person you bond with."

"And you need a way out of dark places when Jack sends you there."

3.

Will looks embarrassed when Hannibal opens his hotel door. “You were sleeping,” he says.

“Not quite.” Hannibal steps aside to let him in. “Come on in.” And when Will hesitates, “Please.”

Will does, reluctantly, and doesn’t seem to know where to put himself. Hannibal is in his soft sleep clothes, and perches on the edge of the bed. Will takes the chair across from him, and settles. “We have to stop meeting like this,” he jokes.

“Half dressed in hotel rooms?” Hannibal rejoins.

“Wouldn’t want to give people the wrong idea.”

“Or the right one.”

Will’s glance is sly, not quite making contact. “I wanted to make sure you’re alright,” he says, wary.

“I am.” Hannibal touches the back of his head, where Abigail had struck him with the poker as part of their ruse. “I took something for the pain. No signs of concussion.”

“I defer to the doctor. And Abigail?”

“Shaken, but unharmed.”

Will nods, his face contorting for a moment at the mention of her name. An uneasiness perching on his already-burdened shoulders.

“It’s good to see you,” Hannibal says. It comes out soft. Hannibal wants to pull him in. His patience is tested whenever they are apart, and makes him feel restless; makes him want to capture Will and have him helpless; makes him want to be the only person Will ever lays eyes on again.

Will flushes and works his jaw, hands rubbing at his thighs. “I was halfway to the airport. I thought, ‘it won’t be so bad, I just saw him’.”

“And here you are.”

“You’ve been very… accommodating,” Will says, like an accusation. “Giving me space.”

“That’s what you need. I don’t wish to overwhelm you.”

“You don’t know how to let someone in that deep.”

It would not do for Will to think him apathetic. “I think of you constantly,” Hannibal admits. “Every moment I spend with you replenishes me. And when we are apart—”

“You ache.”

“Acutely.”

Will lets out a slow breath between his teeth. So tense. Resisting. He’s beautiful even in the horrid hotel light.

“Would you stay?” Hannibal asks.

“People really would notice that.”

“I don’t care.”

Will looks at him truly, and it’s arresting, like being flayed. “You really mean that.”

“We have nothing to be ashamed of.”

“Jack won’t like it. Alana won’t like it. You’re supposed to be my therapist.”

“But I am not. It’s a misconception, and a useful one if you truly wish to keep our bonding private.”

Will hesitates. “You need to rest. And I’m a bad bed partner.”

“I’ll sleep easier with you near.” Hannibal allows himself a smile. “You haven’t said ‘no’ yet.”

Hannibal is nearly asleep by the time Will is done fetching his travel bag, brushing his teeth, and stripping down to his boxers and undershirt. They lay next to each other on the bed, not touching. Will sighs, and shifts, first to his side away from Hannibal, and then onto his back. Their breathing syncs up, and they both sleep the night through.

—

“I got so close to him,” Will says. “Sometimes I felt like we were doing the same things at various times of the day. Like I was eating or showering or sleeping at the same time he was.”

“Even after he was dead?”

“Even after he was dead.” Will’s voice takes on Hannibal’s cadence.

“Like you bonded with him.”

“Like an extension of myself.” Will shakes his head. “I can get lost in people, if I’m not careful.”

“You and I and Abigail all shared a trauma together. Trauma can form a connective tissue.”

“That kind of bond can be disastrous.” Will looks at him sharply. “Is that how this is going to end?”

“I’m not going anywhere, Will,” Hannibal says softly.

4.

Hannibal thinks of teacups as he lures Abigail in.

5.

It's somewhat difficult to resist being physically close with Will when they're in the same room. When they're apart, he can distract himself from the ache in his belly. Not so like this: Will pacing his office, agitated, speaking of murder and madness.

So Hannibal allows himself to give in, and stands behind Will, close, leaning in to breathe in his scent. There is something feverish below the harsh aftershave. Will notices, and quips, "Did you just smell me?"

"Difficult to avoid," Hannibal says softly, apologetically. He brushes his hand by Will's arm and the other man shudders, leans back. Let Will think he's overcome by their bonding, instead of sniffing out whether or not he's sick. "Could I convince you to change your aftershave?"

"Planning on sniffing me often, Doctor Lecter?" Will says snidely.

"Ideally."

—

Hannibal imagines the possibilities. The problem with bonding with Will is that, at some point, the man will look at Hannibal and see that behind the veil is not a common narcissist but something far darker. Will is smart and almost preternaturally observant, and the bond only heightens his empathy. Before that comes, Hannibal will have to incapacitate him. Maybe it's time to release Miriam Lass, and make room in his basement.

But if Will is going insane, or sick, maybe Hannibal can secure his dependence and explore his mind without detection. Will has the makings of a spectacular killer—he just needs a nudge in the right direction.

6.

Speaking of dear Miriam, Jack is in a twist about losing his young protege. Hannibal lets her leave Jack a message. He's always been fond of a good resurrection.

Dr. Chilton has been using unorthodox psychiatry to create a pretender to Hannibal's throne. Well, two can play at that game. He'll make an adequate scapegoat for the ripper when Hannibal releases Miriam.

7.

Hannibal hasn't been this mentally stimulated since he was a young man. Proximity to the FBI and bonding with a brilliant man who could catch him has given him a persistent sort of high. It's dangerous. It's addicting. Hannibal wants to be the only killer in Will's head, wants to be the only monster in his nightmares, wants to see if Will can actually understand him.

Will is kept busy by these cases and they haven't had much time to spend together. It's wearing away at Hannibal; murder helps let off some of that steam.

"I can't stay," Will says, offering the bottle of wine in apology. "I have a date with the Chesapeake Ripper."

Hannibal's disappointment is like a pin dropped on marble.

8.

He is already driving to Will's with leftovers the next day when Will calls him and asks him to come over. "I know it's a long drive…"

"I'm already on my way."

Will looks sleepless, and unaccountably handsome in his beanie and jacket, waiting on the porch when Hannibal pulls up. The pull to touch him is so strong, Hannibal's throat aches with it. He walks up to Will and stands closer than is proper.

"I brought lunch," Hannibal tells him, lifting the cooler in explanation. "Since you missed last night."

Will winces. He lets Hannibal in and they go to the kitchen to drop off the food. "Way too much socializing for me," he says, trying to lighten the mood.

"It's quite alright. And if the result is having you all to myself now, I can't complain."

Will blushes. "Has it been difficult?"

Hannibal knows he means the bonding. "Has it for you?"

"I'm used to it," Will says. "The… ache is different when it's unrequited. But I know how to cope. Can we go for a walk? I thought I heard a wounded animal last night."

Hannibal thinks that Will is trying to change the conversation, but when they get outside and start walking through the fields, Will says, "I know I haven't been very reliable."

"You've been busy."

“It’s not just that.” Will looks at the ground and brush for tracks, brow furrowed. “I feel like my head is a mess these days. I keep imagining that something will slip out and… infect you.”

“I’m well fortified, Will.” A part of Hannibal wants to push Will to let him in. Spending time with your bond-partner reduces stress and increases emotional regulation. Hannibal could be a source of stability in Will’s life. But if he keeps the line slack, when Will does fall apart, he will come rushing Hannibal’s way.

“I do want to spend time with you,” Will says. “I just need to be able to clear my head, too.”

“That’s what you’ve done.”

“Well… I might have stayed up late last night with old Ripper cases,” Will admits. “Alleged cases.”

Hannibal hides his pleasure behind, “I’m glad you told me.”

Their hands brush occasionally as they walk the property. They see no signs of a wounded animal. Eventually, Will huffs in frustration.

“What do you think you heard?” Hannibal asks.

“A coyote, maybe,” Will says. “If it wasn’t a coyote, the coyote’s probably got to it. Even if it was a coyote.”

“They’ll eat their own kind?” Hannibal asks.

“They’re highly adaptable.” Will crouches in the brush, frowning again. “If they’re hungry…”

“See something?”

“No. I’m not finding any tracks except for our own.” He looks disquieted at that.

Headaches, fever, sleepwalking, auditory hallucinations. Hannibal adds the new symptom to the list.

—

Tobias wants to bond with him. It makes killing him all the more satisfying.

Will looks frenzied when he comes into the office. He rushes over to check that Hannibal is alright, and snaps at Jack for bothering him. Jack gives them both a look that means that they will talk about this, whatever this is, later.

Hannibal tries not to beam as Will escorts him out, his body language protective.

“Listen I—I need to stay,” Will says, plaintive, when they arrive at Hannibal’s house. “I’m sorry—”

“Will. It’s alright.”

“Can we—I know we haven’t talked about this…” Will touches his arm, grips it, and a shudder goes through him. Will rests his forehead on Hannibal’s shoulder. “Christ, I feel like a mess.”

Hannibal gets them inside and their coats off. Will seems reluctant to stop touching him. They end up in the lounge, sitting side by side on a couch.

“After a trauma it’s common for bond-pairs to seek comfort in each other,” Hannibal says. “More bonding hormones are released.”

“So academic,” Will teases, a little breathless.

“It’s the majority of my reference point,” Hannibal admits. “All I mean to say is that it’s accountable.”

Will rests his head on the back of the couch. “Is this helping you keep your distance, or do you really not feel like your skin is on fire?”

Hannibal puts his hand on Will’s thigh and watches him melt further into the couch. He immediately feels warmth go through his palm, and some pain relief. “You don’t need to provoke me,” Hannibal says quietly. Will takes Hannibal’s hand in his. “Just tell me what you’re thinking. Just ask for what you want.”

Will’s jaw works. His head is still tilted back, his eyes closed. “I’ve had platonic bonds. We don’t need to… but I need to touch you.” His grip tightens.

“You can,” Hannibal says.

Will looks at him at that. He turns, reaching out to cup Hannibal’s shoulder and lean into him. It’s awkward, sitting side by side, but oh so good when their foreheads brush.

“I’m quite exhausted,” Hannibal says, “but spend the night. Just sleeping. We can figure out the rest later.”

Will lets out a small breath, and nods.

Episodes 9-13

Chapter Notes

numbers indicate the corresponding episode, and asterisk means big canon divergence.

a fair warning - I'm very proud of this chapter. if you're a new reader of mine, hold your hat.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

9.

It has been a strenuous few days. Between Will's loss of time and learning about Abigail and Nicholas Boyle, the man is strained, and Hannibal can feel it as a tension in his own chest. He has no such empathetic response with Abigail as they are not bonded, but he knows that she is exhausted and vulnerable after their chat in the kitchen. Hannibal knows her deeper, darker secret now: that she helped her father.

Hannibal hoped as much.

After they drop her off at the rehabilitation facility, Will reaches across the car to place his hand atop Hannibal's. Hannibal hooks a thumb over his finger.

"Will you stay the night?" Hannibal asks.

Will's mouth quirks to one side. "I'm still angry with you."

"I know."

But Will comes back home with him anyway.

"I don't like that you kept a secret like that from me," Will says, when they're back in Hannibal's entryway. He looks like he might topple over in a light breeze, and sweat from a mild fever has stuck his curls to his temple, but his voice is firm. "I don't like that I couldn't tell you were hiding something, that my head isn't screwed on right, that we still haven't had time to talk about this." Will gestures between them. He hasn't given Hannibal any space to step out from the doorway and doesn't look inclined to do so anytime soon. Will runs a shaky hand through his hair. "I feel like I'm running out of time."

Hannibal feels the same way.

He steps forward and cups the back of Will's arms, so ready to give whatever it is Will will let him. That simple touch eases some the tension in Hannibal's chest. Their breaths are

synched, have been all night, and mingle in the short span between their bodies. “Be here with me now,” Hannibal tells him.

Will nudges his forehead against Hannibal’s and lets out a harsh breath. “How can I be so frustrated with you and still the only thing I want to do is touch you?”

Hannibal gives him a little smile. “You have more experience in this area, my dear.”

Will leans in, and then Hannibal does as well on instinct, and they kiss. It almost hurts. The sensations are more intense than they have any right to be, so that even the gentle press of their lips sends a jolt down Hannibal’s spine. “Alright?” Will asks him, but neither of them have time to answer.

They can’t stop. Hannibal holds Will’s face in both of his hands and doesn’t let him pull back except to breathe. Will lets out quiet moans and aching breaths every time their lips touch, and digs his fingers into Hannibal’s waist. His grip is bruising, demanding as he pulls Hannibal against him, half snarling as he nips at Hannibal’s mouth and licks inside. Hannibal his helpless but to answer in kind. Will feels like fire in his hands—like the very chemical reactions that birthed the stars.

“Why did we wait so long to do this?” Will gasps against Hannibal’s cheek.

“A few murderers got in the way,” Hannibal responds.

Will laughs, and Hannibal intends to bottle that sound and keep it in his chest for the rest of his days.

“I need—”

“I know. Me too.”

“Bed?”

Hannibal shows him.

Hannibal has never needed sex. When he’s done it before, it was for social advantage, experimentation, or a temporary amusement. Its physically pleasurable, though not as much as a murder or feeding unsuspecting guests long pig. But while bonded, the experience is different. Hannibal needs Will’s touch like its the only balm to the ache in his skin. His arousal is stronger, and the sensations are more intense. And Will is so beautiful that Hannibal finds it hard to think.

The sounds he makes. His smell. The flush on his cheek and neck. The fierce look he gets when he has Hannibal naked on the sheets with his hands pinned down by his side, looking pained and half mad as he hovers above him. All of Hannibal’s senses are filled with him.

“Just—let me,” Will pleads.

“Anything. Anything you want.”

Will doesn't take of his clothes. He keeps Hannibal pinned on his back and grinds down into him, kissing him with tongue and teeth on his mouth, his ear, his neck and shoulder. Anywhere that Will can get his mouth while still plastering their bodies together, he does, and sucks bruises and scrapes Hannibal's skin with his teeth. Hannibal tries to hold him but Will keeps putting his hands aside. Taking the hint, Hannibal raises his hands above his head, and arches his back.

Will curses. His clothed erection digs against Hannibal's thigh. He then sets on kissing and sucking on the skin under Hannibal's arms, nosing the hair at his armpit with a shudder. "I get overwhelmed," Will says, almost a whine. "Just touching you. Baby, let me touch you."

"Will, yes." Hannibal smears a kiss against his cheek.

Will's hands grip his arms and slide down his chest. When he thumbs Hannibal's nipples, Will's groan is louder than his own. Every time Will finds a sensitive spot that curls Hannibal's toes, it's like Will is gutted. He rubs his face against Hannibal's hip and thigh, stubble pricking the skin, soon smoothed by his tongue. It's too fast, too much, and Hannibal's cock is dripping from it, making the hairs at his navel sticky, but he never wants to stop. "God, baby, you're so wet," Will groans.

The sound Hannibal makes—he's not sure he's made that sound before.

Will licks the tip of his cock and Hannibal shudders so much his thigh twitches. "That's it, let me take care of you," Will mutters. He looks perfect down there, clothed against Hannibal's thighs, pressing back the mess of his hair so he can suck Hannibal between reddened lips. It feels so good, Hannibal might float away.

Something kicks in his chest. Hannibal can't think when he's feeling this much, and he's not sure he can veil his instincts and intentions when it feels like Will is under his skin, knocking at the door of his mind. The point of this was to make Will forget his misgivings. Hannibal feels too open. Will is going to get too close, and then—

Will draws his mouth off, and kisses Hannibal's thigh. "I can feel you thinking."

"Certainly… less than I usually am," Hannibal says, a little breathless.

Will licks him, like he can't help himself. He pulls his own hair. "Talk to me?"

"Come up here."

Will crawls up him and Hannibal pulls him into his arms. The contact makes Will twitch, even over his clothes. "This is intense for me," Hannibal says quietly. "I know it is for you. I want your skin against mine, if it's not too much."

"Let's try slowly."

Will strips everything off and crawls back into Hannibal's arms. The skin contact sets Will trembling, his head falling back with a groan. Hannibal needs to kiss him. He lets Will set the pace, first cautious presses against him, then grinding closer until their erections press, sticky

and hot, between their bodies. Will's kisses are brutal, and his nails dig into Hannibal's skin, holding him still when the touch of all of their skin becomes too much and Will shakes with overstimulation. Hannibal praises him whenever Will's mouth isn't on his. "Beautiful. You feel so good. I've got you. Yes, take what you need. Will. Please."

Until his words fade, replaced by gasps and moans. Until his throat aches with fear for what he might say. Until he feels cleaved open by Will's touch and nearness and the intensity of the pleasure.

Will meets his eyes and looks like he wants to tear Hannibal apart. He fucks against Hannibal's hip, lip curling back in a snarl. What must I look like? Hannibal wonders. What must he see?

10.*

The last straw is when Will contaminates a crime scene. He finally asks for help. He managed to hide his loss of time before, but now he cannot, waking up from a crime scene analysis with blood on his hands. Hannibal schedules a brain scan.

Right up until Hannibal sees the scans of Will's brain, Hannibal plans to hide Will's encephalitis. He needs to keep Will sick to keep him at arms length, and has lined everything up just so with Dr. Sutcliffe. But when he sees the inflammation with his own eyes and thinks of Will confused and dulled in his arms, he changes his mind.

That's what contingency plans are for, after all.

The look of relief on Will's face when Dr. Sutcliffe gives the diagnosis is better than the sun on his skin. Treatment begins immediately. It's not going to be short or pleasant: the doctors will have Will on an intensive immunotherapy regimen for at least two weeks in the hospital, but the full treatment will be months. They haven't exactly caught it early.

Will seems to get sicker at first. He's feverish and in pain, and frustrated that he can't help further with the case. Hannibal can hardly leave his side. When he goes home to sleep and prepare food for the hospital stay, or even just outside in the quiet of his car to take phone appointments, his very bones ache. It's gotten worse, and Hannibal only hopes it is because Will is sick, and this dependency will become tolerable again when Will is better.

Alana notices the second time she visits.

"How often have you been here?" she asks Hannibal quietly, so as not to wake Will.

"I don't sleep here," he admits, and watches her recalibrate.

"The nurse said you were partners."

"I don't know that he'd say that."

“You know that Will has hyperattachment disorder. You’re his therapist.” Her eyes have a flinty edge to them.

“Never officially, not since the first session.”

She stares at Will for a long time. Finally, she asks, “Why?”

“What do you mean?”

“What are you getting out of this? He bonded with you, didn’t he? And you’re enabling it.”

Hannibal could admit he has bonded as well, but he’s feeling petulant. Let her think what she will. “He’s my friend. We’ve become close. You’re welcome to talk about it with him when he’s awake.”

11. *

Gideon escapes, and Hannibal smells opportunity.

Will is coherent enough to provide a consult when Jack visits, although Hannibal puts on a performance of objecting to the stress. Will is quick to identify that Gideon’s work is noticeably not like the Ripper’s—“He would never leave behind organs.”

Hannibal finds his own psychiatric attending to slaughter and point to Gideon. The man may be confused by who he is, but he’s rather transparent to Hannibal. He stops by to take care of Will’s dogs and makes a few lures while he’s there. Then he makes “chicken” soup for Will, and they hold hands while he eats.

“If this is what it takes to spend a week together, you’re getting hospitalized next time,” Will complains.

“I’ll take you on a proper vacation when you’re discharged.”

“Have any place in mind?”

“I’d love to show you Florence.”

Will looks away, a flicker of pain across his face. Hannibal feels the sadness as well, and he’s not sure which one of them it came from.

-

They don’t manage to capture Gideon, so Hannibal takes him instead. The man has an admiral sense of humor. It’s too bad he can’t prolong this—Gideon would make a delightful house guest.

12.*

The next week, Will is discharged to outpatient. Hannibal offers to let him stay at his house, which is closer to the hospital, but as he thought Will turns him down. “I need some time at home, just me. Is that alright?”

Hannibal needs to learn how to spend a day apart from Will again. “You have an appointment in two days. I’ll get you settled at yours, and then pick you up on Tuesday.”

Will squeezes his hand. “Thank you. I’ll call—you can call, whenever you like.”

The separation is quite painful. His skin becomes extremely sensitive, so that the brush of fabric irritates him. The accompanying migraine almost sends him to bed. But pain is only a sensation, and one Hannibal has worked hard to master.

What really gets him is the anger.

By all accounts he should enjoy cutting Gideon to ribbons and stringing him up by his own veins. He’s not even mad at Gideon, who rightly points out that imitation is the highest form of flattery while Hannibal cuts him open. He’s angry at the bond, for taxing his concentration; at Will, for tempting him with ridiculous notions of understanding and acceptance; and mostly, at himself, for letting this get so far.

-

“Is it the Ripper?” Jack asks, when Will returns to himself. They stand in the snow, marked here and there by dripping blood from hanging organs, and from the cadaver, emptied and hoisted in the branches of a barren tree.

Will pauses, breath misting in the cold. “It’s different. I told you before—he wouldn’t leave all the organs. He wouldn’t mimic Gideon’s kill.”

“He could be doing the same thing Gideon did to him,” Hannibal counters. “Giving him a taste of his own medicine.”

Will just shakes his head.

Jack looks to the heavens as if pleading. “If it’s not the Ripper then who the hell is it?”

-

Hannibal thinks of clocks. The one he had Will draw when he picked him up was messy but coherent. Tick, tock. Time is running out.

-

Once he drops Will back off at his home, he can’t seem to step away from the door. It feels like his throat is clogged. He clears it, and says, “I need to say.”

Will’s smile is sad, and he doesn’t meet Hannibal’s eyes. “Got it bad, huh?”

Hannibal flexes his hands. “I think seeing you sick in the hospital ruined my ability to be alone. Migraines, insomnia, dysregulation…”

Will goes to him and helps him out of his coat. “I’m sorry. I sometimes forget that you’re not used to this at all. You keep it all hidden pretty well.”

Will takes him to the couch and holds Hannibal in his arms. It is infuriating that immediately Hannibal feels better. “It gets easier with time,” Will tells him, stroking the back of his neck.

“I’m going to hold you to that,” Hannibal says tartly.

Will chuckles, and noses his cheek. “God, you hate this, don’t you? You know, just because we’re bonded and I’m good at reading people, doesn’t mean I’m psychic. You still have to talk to me.”

Hannibal stares at Will’s desk. At the fishing lures. He wonders which truth to serve Will; wonders if Will has even bonded with him at all, or just with the veil he wears, and what will happen when he sees it as such.

“I don’t know how to do this,” Hannibal finally says.

Will doesn’t look rejected, just attentive. He is so beautiful that Hannibal feels sick. “You’ve been alone for a long time.”

“So have you.”

“Not in the same way.”

“We are identically different.”

Will smirks, and pulls back. “You know that I’m going to bond with more people. And I don’t just mean the killers in my imagination. At some point in the future, this is going to happen to me again.” He shrugs. “They aren’t often reciprocated, and when they are they don’t last very long. But if you want to stay in this, there are going to be others. And if you don’t want to… it will be easier on me than on you.”

Hannibal sees red. He imagines taking Will by the throat and crushing his windpipe. Dragging him to the kitchen and gutting him on the tiles. Taking the poker by the fireplace and sticking it down Will throat for daring to say such a thing. He feels numb when his vision clears, and sees Will looking at him like—like what? Hannibal can’t read him.

“Hey. Stay with me.” Will thumbs his cheeks, voice tender. “We need to talk about this.”

Hannibal’s mind is spinning. “Do you want to break our bond?”

Will winces. “No, I don’t. But just because we’ve bonded doesn’t mean that our lives are compatible.”

“I can’t,” Hannibal says. “I won’t.”

“No one has ever died of a broken bond before.”

I did, Hannibal thinks. What he says is, “If you keep talking like that, I’m going to fuck you until you scream.”

Will doesn’t flinch, but he does blush, and his eyes narrow into slits. “You’re more possessive than you let on,” he says. Hannibal can see his pulse, rapid in his neck, and wants to bite it.

Hannibal mentally slaps himself, and closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. “My apologies, Will. I haven’t been feeling like myself.”

“It’s alright.”

“I don’t want to end our bond.”

“What do you want?”

“To keep you all to myself,” Hannibal answers honestly. “To see you thrive, and deny yourself nothing.”

Will’s legs open wider. “We should put the dogs upstairs, if you want me screaming.”

-

It’s only later, when Hannibal has exhausted himself to an early slumber but wakes to the sound of the car pulling out of the drive, that he realizes how Will has played him.

13.*

Tick, tock. Time is up. The pieces are in place, and all that is left is to play them. He has no time to languish over the pain that Will has run from him. That Will has hidden something from him. Hannibal is calm—he is dancing, and though it is improvised, he knows the song by heart. All hunters know the sound.

Will has taken Hannibal’s car, and he really shouldn’t be driving when he’s in treatment for encephalitis. Hannibal tries to take Will’s to chase after him, but the keys are gone. Will’s phone is off when Hannibal rings.

Hours later, when he’s procured another vehicle and has set out with no idea where to go, Abigail calls him.

“Hannibal, I think I need help.”

“Tell me what’s happening.”

“I’m at the airport. Will’s taken me here… he said he needs my help to find a killer. The one who killed Cassie.”

And Marissa. And Gideon.

“Where are you going?” Hannibal asks.

“Back to Minnesota. He says… that’s where it all began.”

Clever boy. “I’m coming to get you. But I need you to do exactly what I say.”

-

He finds them in the kitchen of Abigail’s old house, the tension in the air so thick you could cut it with a knife. It tastes of fear and fever. Abigail’s eyes are wide and frightened; Will is sweating and trembling with emotion.

“What are you doing here?” Will spits, fear leaking into his voice.

Hannibal is calm as snow. “I came to get you.”

Will glances at Abigail, and then back. There is revelation in his eyes, mad as a vision from God. “You knew, didn’t you?” Will hisses. “It wasn’t just Nicholas Boyle. You knew.”

“Abigail only told me recently,” Hannibal says. “Before that, I suspected. As, I think, you did.”

Will makes a pained, choked sound. His eyes are wet. It tugs deep in Hannibal’s chest, and he steps towards him, hands out to hold and comfort his bond mate. To subdue and take him.

Will takes a step back.

Hannibal sees the hard look in his eyes and the turn of his arm as he reaches to the side for the knife block. Hannibal doesn’t pounce. Will grabs a knife and puts it between them, saying, “Don’t take another step forward,” just as Abigail shrieks, “Will!”

The kitchen seems suspended as a bubble in the bloodstream, traveling to a vulnerable vein. The blue waiting for the bright red of oxygenation.

Hannibal puts his hands up. “Abigail, why don’t you come here.”

“Don’t!” Will snaps, holding his other hand out to her. “Don’t go near him.”

“I think you’re confused,” Hannibal says, taking a small step forward. “You’re still recovering, and you look feverish. Just put the knife down.”

“I’m not confused,” Will snarls. His whole body seems to be trembling, except for the hand that holds the knife. “Not anymore.”

The bond flares. Both men know the other will strike. The bond will not prevent it. On the contrary. They step forward, and dance. Abigail shouts. Flesh connects. Blood spills. Hannibal slips the syringe out of his sleeve, and dips Will into a bow.

-

Will wakes strapped to a hospital bed, but he is not in a hospital.

Hannibal gives him time to gather his wits and shake off the cotton weight of the drugs. Then, he steps out from the shadows, and smiles at his bond mate.
“Hello, Will.”

Chapter End Notes

there will be a part two which is a variation S2. I'm not sure if a S3 makes sense yet.

fun facts:

Will goes into treatment after his brain scan, so he never meets Georgia, so she never stalks him. they end up in the same hospital so its possible they cross paths. with no Georgia, Hannibal uses Gideon as a Copycat Killer kill, which I thought was ironic considering Gideon mimicked the Chesapeake Ripper.

Will's encephalitis requires more treatment and a longer recovery here than is implied in the show. when he's discharged and his head is clearer, he gets some hunches and wants to track down the Copycat Killer. that's why he takes Abigail to Minnesota. Abigail gets rid of his daily medicine during their trip, at Hannibal's instruction. or does another medical sabotage that I didn't have time to research.

thank you so much for reading!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!